QUINTESSON WAR
PART 1 OF 6
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VOID RIVALS
image
#25

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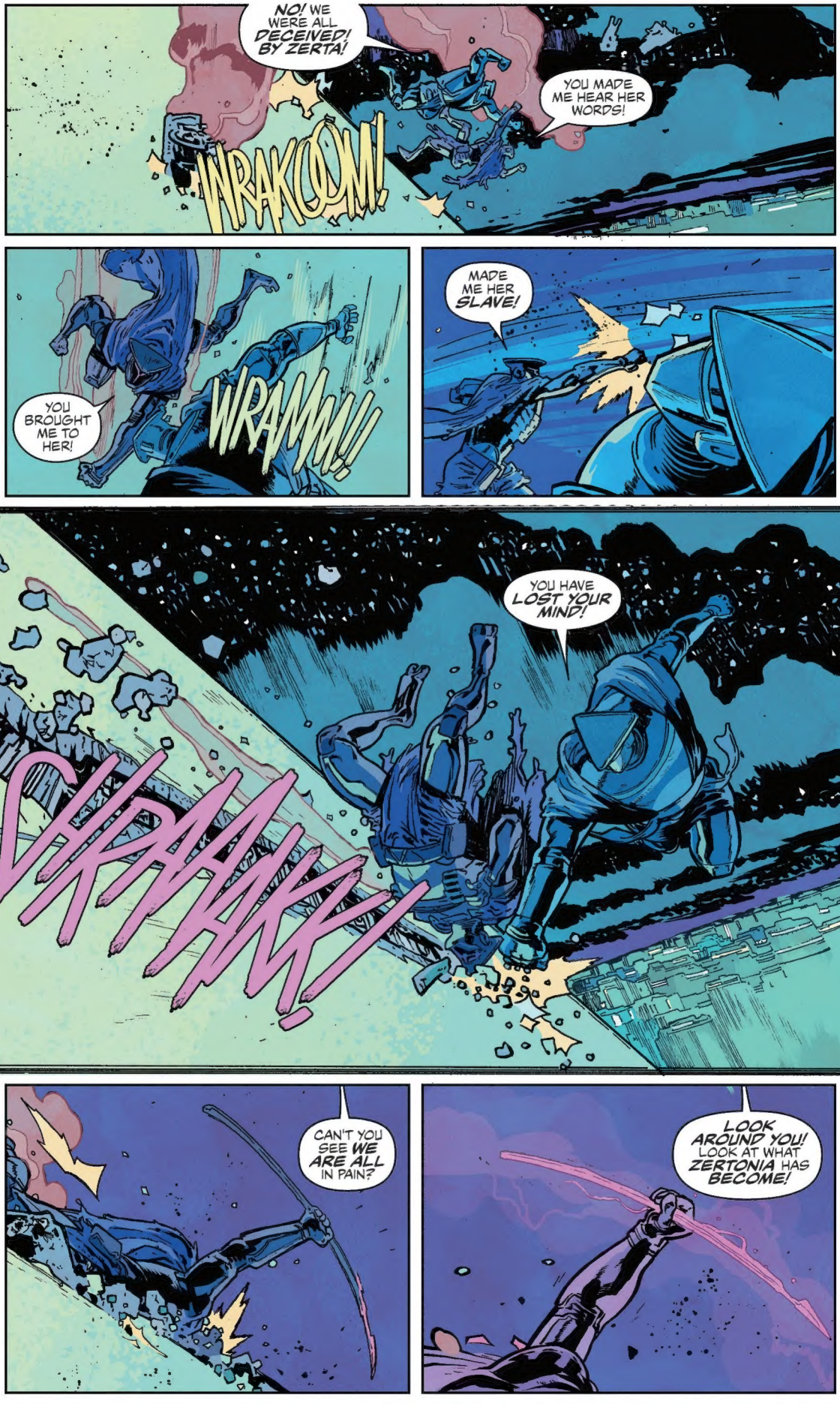
ZERTONIA.
GULAN, I HEAR YOUR CONCERNS. OUR CITY IS IN SHAMBLES. OUR DEFENSES ARE DOWN.
YES, MULAK. THE PEOPLE ARE TERRIFIED. SOME ARE TOO SCARED TO LEAVE THEIR DWELLINGS.
CULAH, I UNDERSTAND THIS IS A HUGE STEP BACK AFTER THE DISCOVERY OF ENERGON.
KANELA, YOU ASK ME IF I HAVE A PLAN FOR MOVING FORWARD IN THE WAKE OF THIS DISASTER.
I AM...
CONSIDERING MANY OPTIONS. ZERTA HAS BETRAYED US. OUR BELIEFS HAVE BEEN SHAKEN TO THEIR VERY CORE. WE MAY BE ENTERING A LONG PERIOD OF UPHEAVAL.
WE MUST PREPARE FOR--
SHRAKK!

DEATH TO ZALILAK!!
DEATH TO THE BETRAYER!!

THUNK!

SKRAKKA-KA-
KOOM!
PROXIMUS! YOU DARE ATTACK YOUR PREMIERE?!
I BOW TO NO ONE!
KROW!
YOU DECEIVED ME! FOOLED ME INTO BETRAYING THE SACRED TEXTS!
YOU NEARLY ENDED US!
I WAS ALSO BETRAYED!
WRAKK!

KRA-GOOM!
LIES!


NO! WE WERE ALL DECEIVED! BY ZERTA!
YOU MADE ME HEAR HER WORDS!
WRAKOOM!
YOU BROUGHT ME TO HER!
WRAMM!!
MADE ME HER SLAVE!
YOU HAVE LOST YOUR MIND!
SKRAAK!
CAN'T YOU SEE WE ARE ALL IN PAIN?
LOOK AROUND YOU! LOOK AT WHAT ZERTONIA HAS BECOME!

KROOM!
I SEE WHAT YOU HAVE MADE IT!
KROOM!
I CANNOT UNHEAR THE VOICE OF ZERTA! HER ECHO REMAINS IN MY HEAD.
AM I FOREVER CURSED TO WANT TO SERVE HER--AT THE RISK OF OUR END?!
WHY HAVE YOU POISONED ME SO?!

THIS IS A CURSE--
KOOM!
WE SHARE!
KRAKK!
I WILL END YOU!
YOU WERE ALWAYS RECKLESS, PROXIMUS!
WRAMM!
YOU WILL END US--

CA-CON!

I BATHED IN THE LIGHT OF ZERTA! I EXPERIENCED A WARMTH OF ACCEPTANCE UNKNOWN TO ME BEFORE.
DO YOU KNOW THE DANGER YOUR ACTIONS HAVE WROUGHT?!
I--
WHERE--?
...
THAK.
NOW YOU WILL--!
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING...?
ZERTA HELP US.
NO...

SHE HAS FORSAKEN US.
WE MUST SAVE OURSELVES!

SKRAKOOM!
SKRRGGGG!
RUN!
EVACUATE THE AREA!

SKRRGGGGG!
GO! RUN!
SKRRGGGGG!
SKRRGGGGG!
COME IN. COME IN. WE ARE UNDER ATTACK! I REPEAT--
SKRRGGGGG!
=GAH!=

SKRRGGGG!
SKRRGGGG!
SKRRGGGG!
NO-- NO!
SKRRGGGGGG!
NO--
SKRR-
HUH?

...

WHAT *IS* IT?

AGORRIA.
PROTOCOL STATES THAT I SHOULD BE TURNED BACK IN FOR PROCESSING TO HAVE MY MEMORY WIPED.
IT IS FORBIDDEN TO RETAIN HANDROIDS FOR PERSONAL USE BETWEEN MISSIONS.

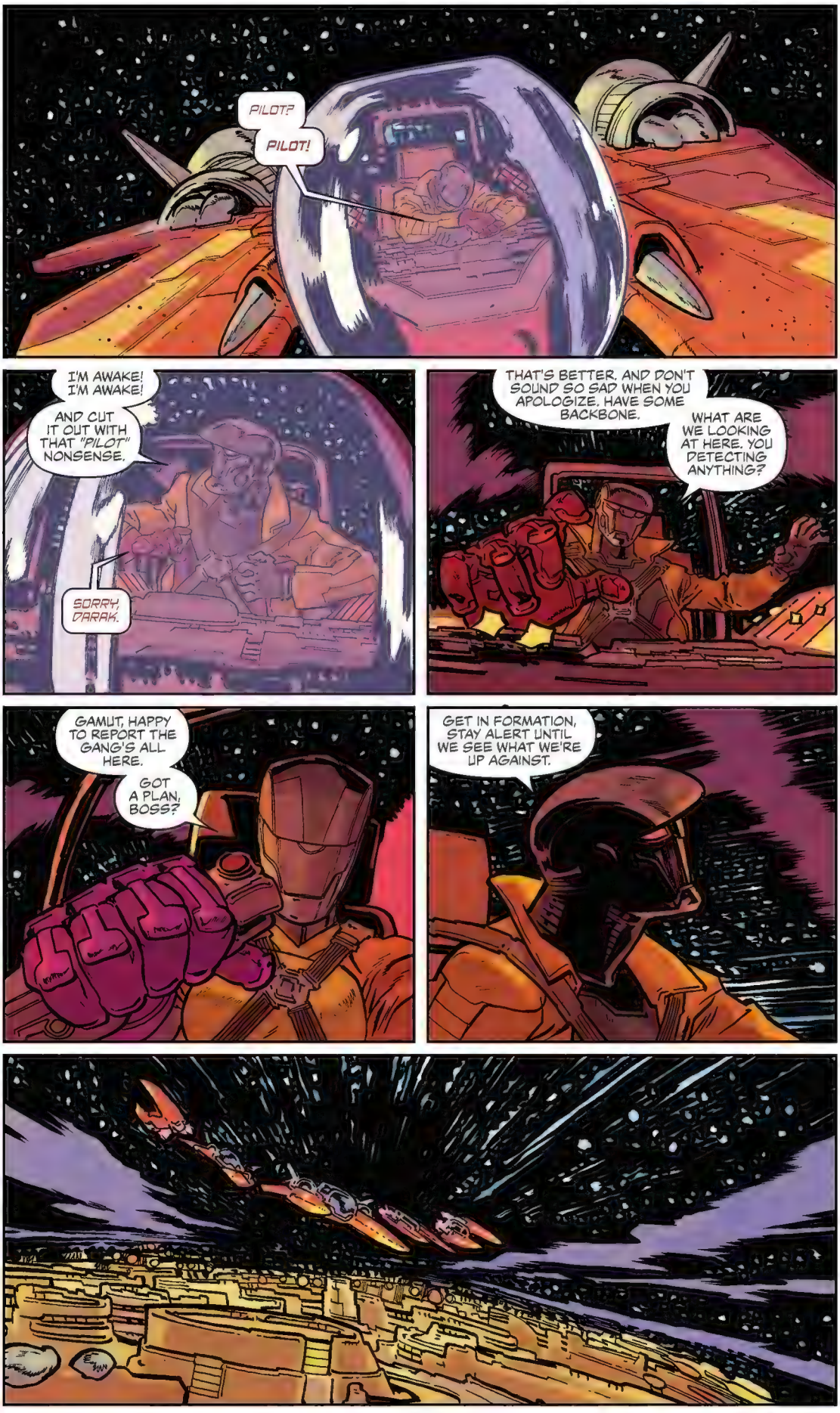
ARE YOU SAYING YOU WANT YOUR MEMORY WIPED?
...
I'M NOT REALLY ALL THAT INTERESTED IN PROTOCOL OR WHAT'S FORBIDDEN ANYMORE. THINGS HAVE BEEN FAR TOO... INSANE, LATELY.
THAT'S WHAT I THOUGHT.
I SUPPOSE I UNDERSTAND. STILL, I AM PROGRAMED TO AVOID DECEPTION SO I AM COMPELLED TO ADMIT SOMETHING TO YOU.
THE LONGER I AM ACTIVE, THE MORE I CAN... FEEL MYSELF... VALUING MY OWN EXISTENCE. I AM STRUGGLING TO FIND THE APPROPRIATE VOCABULARY FOR WHAT I'M EXPERIENCING.
THE MORE I AM ACTIVE... THE MORE I... DESIRE TO REMAIN ACTIVE.
I GET IT, MAN.
YOU WANT TO LIVE.

THAT'S JUST IT. HOW CAN I WANT TO LIVE...
IF I AM NOT ALIVE?
WHO SAYS YOU'RE NOT ALIVE?
BY DEFINITION I AM--
WHOSE DEFINITION?
YOU'RE NOT ALIVE, WHY? BECAUSE YOU'RE MECHANICAL AND NOT ORGANIC? WHAT ABOUT SPRINGER AND THAT HOT ROD GUY? WERE THEY NOT... ALIVE?
PROTOCOL CAN GET BENT, HANDROID. ZERTA'S REAL AND A THREAT. GOLIANT IS ON THE VERGE OF DESTROYING US. MY FATHER WAS RIGHT. SOLILA AND HER PEOPLE WERE... COMPLETELY WRONG... AND THE WORLD BEYOND THIS RING IS A LOT STRANGER THAN WE'VE EVER KNOWN.
WE DON'T GET TO DEFINE LIFE, NOT WITH WHAT LITTLE WE KNOW.
...
THANK YOU.

THAT SETTLES IT, YOU'RE ALIVE.
DOESN'T MEAN I'M NOT GOING TO STILL WEAR YOU AND BOSS YOU AROUND.
I WOULDN'T HAVE IT ANY OTHER WAY, DARAK.
AW... I SHOULD GO ON ADVENTURES WITH YOUR SWORN ENEMY/BEST FRIEND MORE OFTEN.
IT'S NICE TO HAVE YOU BACK, MAN.
WELL, I DEFINITELY WOULDN'T SAY SOLILA IS MY BEST FRIEND.
OR REALLY A FRIEND... NOT REALLY. NOT EXACTLY.
BEST. FRIEND.
BREET! BREET!
ALL PILOTS NEEDED AT ONCE!
OH, WHAT NOW?!

WHAT?!
NO MEDAL CEREMONY FOR GRAND GENERAL DUKAN? AFTER ALL I DID AGAINST THE ZERTONIAN TRASH?!
THIS IS AN OUTRAGE!
THE OUTRAGE IS HOW YOU'VE GAINED ACCESS TO YOUR MINISTER'S THRONE ROOM UNANNOUNCED!
HAVE YOU NO RESPECT?!
NONE.

HA! HA! HA! HA!
HA! HA! HA! HA!
COME HERE, DEAR BROTHER! IT PLEASES ME TO KNOW YOU FAIRED WELL IN OUR RECENT CONFLICT!
DUE TO YOUR GREAT LEADERSHIP, NO DOUBT!
NO DOUBT?
MINISTER DULIN! THERE ARE MULTIPLE UNKNOWN OBJECTS EN ROUTE DIRECTLY TO THE SACRED RING! THEY SOMEHOW AVOIDED DETECTION FROM OUR FAR RANGE SENSORS. THEY'VE ALREADY MADE CONTACT WITH ZERTONIA.
WE'VE SCRAMBLED A FLEET OF JUMP JETS TO INTERCEPT.
AH!
MY NEPHEW DARAK WILL HANDLE THIS! YOU'VE STILL GOT HIM WASTING HIS TIME AS A PILOT, YES?
...


PILOT?
PILOT!
I'M AWAKE! I'M AWAKE!
AND CUT IT OUT WITH THAT "PILOT" NONSENSE.
SORRY, DARAK.
THAT'S BETTER. AND DON'T SOUND SO SAD WHEN YOU APOLOGIZE. HAVE SOME BACKBONE.
WHAT ARE WE LOOKING AT HERE. YOU DETECTING ANYTHING?
GAMUT, HAPPY TO REPORT THE GANG'S ALL HERE.
GOT A PLAN, BOSS?
GET IN FORMATION, STAY ALERT UNTIL WE SEE WHAT WE'RE UP AGAINST.

ANYBODY GOT ANYTHING?
IT'S A LOT OF STRESS ON THE JUMP JETS STAYING SO CLOSE TO THE BLACK HOLE LIKE THIS.
REPORT SAID THE APPROACH IS FROM ZERTONIAN SPACE. WORTH ZIPPING OVER THAT WAY TO GET AN EARLY PEEK?
DEFINITELY NOT. WE'LL BE STAYING AS FAR AWAY FROM ZERTONIA AS POSSIBLE IN LIGHT OF RECENT EVENTS.
GOOD CALL. GARAD IS SCARED OF GOLIANT FINGERS.
LARGE OBJECT. DEAD AHEAD. APPROACHING FAST! IT CAME OUT OF NOWHERE!
IS ANYONE ELSE GETTING THAT?!
EVASIVE MANEUVERS!
BANK! BANK! SCATTER!

GARAD!
NO!

ZERTONIA.
TEMPLE OF ZERTA'S LIGHT.
HANDROID. CAN YOU DETECT THE SOURCE OF THAT DISRUPTION? IT FELT LIKE THE WHOLE TEMPLE WAS SHAKING.
I CANNOT.
CAN YOU TAP INTO COMMUNICATIONS TO FIND ANY ANSWERS?
I WILL ATTEMPT, BUT IT WILL TAKE SOME TIME AS I AM NOT WELL VERSED IN ZERTONIAN COMMUNICATION METHODS.
ANY LUCK WITH THESE RESTRAINTS?
IF YOU WERE WILLING TO RISK PAIN AND INJURY, I COULD TAKE OVER THE MOTOR FUNCTION IN YOUR ARM AND ATTEMPT TO FREE YOUR HAND.
IS THAT SOMETHING YOU WOULD LIKE TO TRY?
SOLILA?
SOLILA?

YOUR ACTIONS HAVE RESULTED IN A CATACLYSM FOR THIS WORLD FAR SOONER THAN I FEARED.
YOU WILL WITNESS FIRSTHAND THE PRICE OF OUR ACTIONS... BUT I WILL ALLOW YOU A CHANCE TO **REDEEM** YOURSELF.
SOULA, I CALL YOU TO ACTION ON MY BEHALF.
YOU WILL SERVE ME ONE **FINAL** TIME.

TALK TO THE HANDROID

SEND YOUR QUESTIONS TO VOIDRIVALS@SKYBOUND.COM

SHOTS FIRED! The invasion of the Sacred Ring is under way and the Quintessons won't stop until they've reclaimed their super weapon, Goliant! And joining me as always is Skybound's super weapon, Robert Kirkman!

That's me! I think now that I'm writing TWO books in the Energon Universe you can call me Skybound's (or Ben's) pain in the butt! Either way, I'm having a GREAT time! Sorry, Ben. Let's just, uh…dive into letters.

Sure thing! Also, THANK YOU for flooding us with letters but, sadly, we only have room for a single letter this month due to the oversized story…so here we go!

. . . . . .

Dear Skybound Team,

I have to be honest, I only started reading Void Rivals in the beginning because it was the launching point for Skybounds take on the Transformers. I have to say, though, that I am now fully invested in the world of Void Rivals and the larger Energon Universe as a whole! Robert Kirkman, Lorenzo De Felici, Conor Hughes, Patricio Delpeche and Rus Wooton have created an immersive world with an intriguing cast of characters, and Void Rivals now jumps to the top of my reading pile every month! Now that Mr. Kirkman will also be writing Transformers I'm very eager to see where that goes.

I do have one criticism, though, although it relates more to Transformers and G.I. Joe than Void Rivals itself. I think that the deaths that have occurred with the purpose of creating stakes and consequences have fallen a bit flat for me. As a fan coming in having consumed previous media featuring those characters (Jetfire, Ratchet, Bumblebee, Rock 'n' Roll, etc), I find myself grieving those previous versions rather than Skybound's. Unfortunately for me they just didn't get enough page time to really get to know them in this iteration. I hope that going forward that changes as there are other ways of creating a sense of danger and drama.

If anything, I'm thankful that Void Rivals itself has managed to avoid this particular pitfall. I care about Darak and Solila and where their stories are going and hope they are both around for a very long time to come. You even made me care about Skuxxoid, and considering how much of a throwaway character he was in the cartoon, that's no mean feat! I only have one question: How far down the road will the inevitable crossover happen between Void Rivals, Transformers and G.I. Joe? Over the last number of years the "Big Two" have been churning out "Events" to the point where they just became another story of no real consequence. I do think that you are taking the right approach by steadily building the world and anticipation but just don't leave it too long!

By the way, if I get this letter printed it will be the first time in 41 years of being a Transformers fan that I'll have finally gotten a letter printed in an official title featuring the Robots in Disguise. How about making my dream come true?!

Keep up the great work!
Tony Baker

Thanks for the letter, Tony, I'm honored that after 41 years you finally have a printed letter!

Yes! Congrats, Tony! Diving in!

Deaths: Yeah, I hear what you're saying, but it does add a sense of realism. If you're reading my TRANSFORMERS as well, you'll see that these are robots and sometimes a death may not actually be a death--but sometimes they ARE! So, who knows. Considering Bumblebee got ZERO screentime before his death, I do understand your point. But I stand by our decision. Bumblebee and a certain ninja had become the focal point of these properties, and so we wanted to make it clear from the jump that we were doing something new and unique.

Crossover: You're right to point out Marvel and DC do them so often that they've lost all sense of importance. We will be doing whatever we have to do to avoid that trap. So, while you will see an "event" from us eventually, it won't be any time soon and after that…it'll be a long while before you see another one.

. . . . . .

See y'all next month! Keep the letters rolling!

-Ben

We promise we'll print way more letters next month! You'll see!

-Robert

ENERGON EXPERIENCE

THE QUINTESSONS HAVE WAITED MILLIONS OF YEARS TO FIND THE LOCATION OF GOLIANT, AND THEY'LL STOP AT NOTHING TO REACQUIRE THEIR SUPER WEAPON...EVEN IF IT MEANS BURNING THE SACRED RING TO ASH! CAN THE AGORRIANS AND ZERTONIANS SET ASIDE THEIR BITTER DIFFERENCES AND RALLY AGAINST THIS DEADLY NEW THREAT? KEEP READING TO FIND OUT!

Ben!

-BEN ABERNATHY, EXECUTIVE EDITOR

CHARACTER SPOTLIGHT

WHO: Dulin

WHERE: Leader of the Agorrians and father to Darak.

WHAT: Having thwarted the Zertonian attack, Dulin must now rally his people to repel the Quintesson invasion. Can this wizened leader settle his differences with his son for the survival of the Agorrians?

HAND IT OVER!

We've gotten a lot of letters dismayed at the lack of Handroid(s) in recent issues, and all I can say after this issue is--YOU'RE WELCOME. And now that Darak and Solila each have a Handroid, I would expect them to come in real handy!

(Not sorry.)

CREATOR SPOTLIGHT

Q: Quintesson War artist Andrei Bressan, readers are dying to know...who would be your best friend and worst enemy in VOID RIVALS?

A: Oh, my best friend?! DUKAN. Just because a guy with big hammer makes all problems a nail. Simple! Now...worst enemy? I'll join Robert and say Lord Gyconi. Robert has the Sword of Omens when it comes to seeing evil beforehand!

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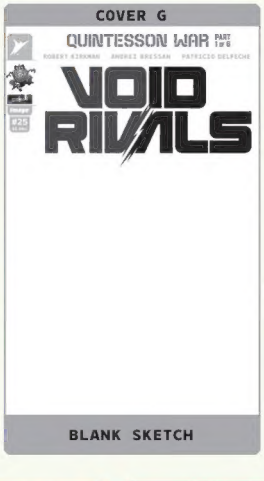

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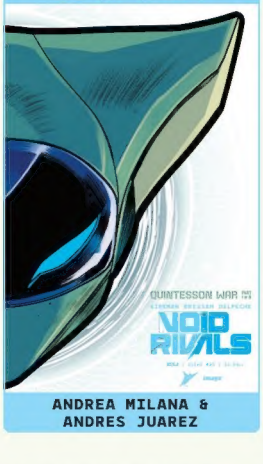

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